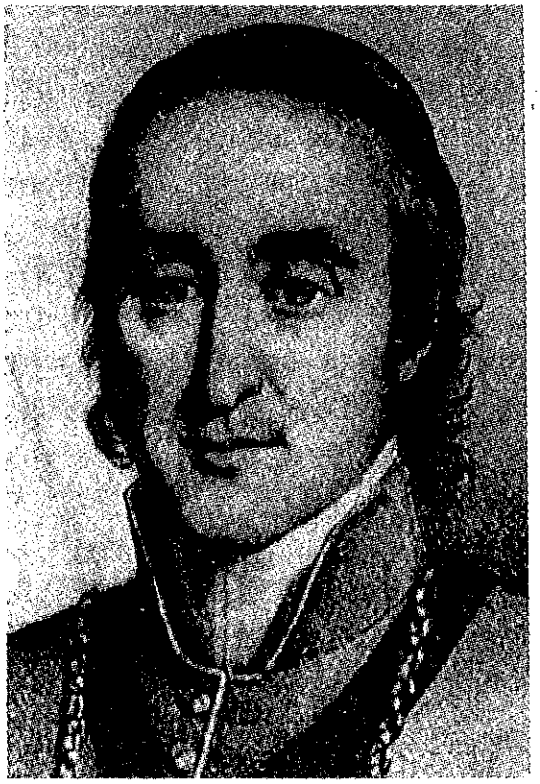
A NOTE FOR VISITORS:

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARNELL, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

As far as can be ascertained, St. John's is the oldest surviving Catholic church in the Auckland Diocese and one of the oldest in New Zealand. It was founded by the first Bishop of Auckland, Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier, and formally instituted by his Lordship on Sunday 12th. of May 1861. This was a decade after Governor Hobson's establishment (short-lived) of Auckland as the political capital of New Zealand.

St. John's was for its first year a dependency on Auckland's pro-Cathedral, the first St. Patricks. St. John's first priest, the Rev. M. O'Hara, was a priest of the Cathedral.



The founder of St. John's: His Lordship
Bishop J. B. F. Pompallier.

For some years before the church was built there was a Catholic primary school on an adjoining site - first with a lay staff, later conducted by the Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters kept the school for more than a hundred years until the Order withdrew from Parnell in 1964. The school was then regretfully closed, and the numerous ministrations of the Sisters were sadly lost to the parish.

In 1862 St. John's became a parish church, and was given to the care of the Franciscans. The Friars were mostly Italian, recruited by Pompallier from Rome. They worked in the parish for eleven years, then dispersed and went on to other missions overseas.

For the following one hundred and seven years St. John's had Diocesan clergy as parish priests. Many were men of distinguished parts. Two were raised from Parnell to the episcopal dignity. One, at the beginning of the 20th. Century, was a vigorous builder. He enlarged the old church by the present wider extension to the rear, built the present presbytery, and erected a new convent (now converted to secular uses).

In 1980 the Marist Fathers assumed responsibility for the parish. In the capable hands, first of the Rev. J. Sloane S.M. and then the Rev. T. Fitzpatrick S.M., the aggiornamento prescribed by the Second Vatican Council was introduced gradually in the liturgy, and lay participation became the order of the day.

A second recent change at St. John's was the welcome influx of youth, many of them students from South East Asia who have come to New Zealand to complete their higher studies. Young and old assimilate happily together. With an organ and choir, St. John's now vibrates with new life.

In 1989 the Marists withdrew from Parnell. The parish reverted to diocesan status under the pastoral care of Fr. Kevin Hackett. With his judicious and orthodox ministrations St. John's flourishes as a house of prayer and praise to the Lord.

In 1997 a complete refurbishment of the church was completed and a new gas heating system installed. We gratefully acknowledge the professional assistance of Mr. Peter Reed of Salmond Architects for his guidance and expertise. We thank the builders A.J. Gundy Ltd. for their practical assistance throughout. We are very grateful to the New Zealand Lotteries Board for providing the fire sprinkler system. The ASB Trust was extremely generous in their assistance in completing the interior of the church and we are gratified for their generous help. The members of the Finance Committee were:
Mr. Gregory Shanahan (Chairman)
Mrs. Patricia Glamuzina
Mr. Maurice Pohlen

Our gratitude is is recorded to them and especially Mr. Gregory Shanahan, for their unfailing loyalty and support.
The Parish Priest at this time was the Rev. Kevin Hackett.

NOTE:
A more complete history of St. John's is available from the presbytery, for the sum of $5.00.